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ODE
TO
INDEPENDENCE.

BY THE LATE

T. SMOLLETT, M.D.

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WITH

NOTES
AND
OBSERVATIONS.

GLASGOW:
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M.DCC.LXXIII.

ODE

TO

INDEPENDENCE.

THE Public may depend upon the authenticity of the following ODE. It is printed from the author's manuſcript, which was communicated to the editors by a Gentleman with whom Dr. SMOLLETT was much connected.

ODE
TO
INDEPENDENCE.

STROPHE.

THY ſpirit, INDEPENDENCE, let me ſhare!
Lord of the lion-heart and eagle-eye,
Thy ſteps I follow with my boſom bare,
Nor heed the ſtorm that howls along the ſky.
Deep in the frozen regions of the north,
A goddeſs violated brought thee forth,
Immortal Liberty, whoſe look ſublime
Hath bleached the tyrant's cheek in every varying clime.
What time the iron-hearted Gaul
With frantic Superſtition for his guide,
Armed with the dagger and the pall,
The ſons of Woden to the field defy'd:
The ruthleſs hag, by Weſer's flood,
In Heaven's name urged the infernal blow;

And red the ſtream began to flow:
The vanquiſhed were baptized with blood!*

ANTISTROPHE.

The Saxon prince in horror fled
From altars ſtained with human gore;
And Liberty his routed legions led
In ſafety to the bleak Norwegian ſhore.
There in a cave aſleep ſhe lay,
Lulled by the hoarſe-reſounding main;
When a bold ſavage paſt that way,
Impelled by Deſtiny, his name Diſdain.
Of ample front the portly chief appear'd:
The hunted bear ſupplyed a ſhaggy veſt;
The drifted ſnow hung on his yellow beard;
And his broad ſhoulders braved the furious blaſt.

* *Baptized with blood*—] Charlemagne obliged four thouſand Saxon priſoners to embrace the Chriſtian religion, and immediately after they were baptized ordered their throats to be cut.—Their prince Vitikind fled for ſhelter to Gotrick king of Denmark.

He ſtopt: he gazed; his boſom glow'd,
And deeply felt the impreſſion of her charms:
He ſeiz'd the advantage Fate allow'd;
And ſtraight compreſſed her in his vigorous arms.

STROPHE.

The Curlieu ſcreamed; the Tritons blew
Their ſhells to celebrate the raviſhed rite;
Old Time exulted as he flew;
And Independence ſaw the light.
The light he ſaw in Albion's happy plains,
Where under cover of a flowering thorn,
While Philomel renewed her warbled ſtrains,
The auſpicious fruit of ſtoln embrace was born----
The mountain Dryads ſeized with joy,
The ſmiling infant to their charge conſign'd;
The Doric muſe careſſed the favourite boy;
The hermit Wiſdom ſtored his opening mind.
As rolling years matured his age,

He flouriſhed bold and ſinewy as his ſire;
While the mild paſſions in his breaſt aſſuage
The fiercer flames of his maternal fire.

ANTISTROPHE.

Accompliſhed thus, he winged his way,
And zealous roved from pole to pole,
The rolls of right eternal to diſplay,
And warm with patriot thoughts the aſpiring ſoul.
On deſart iſles * it was he that rais'd
Thoſe ſpires that gild the Adriatic wave,
Where Tyranny beheld amaz'd
Fair Freedom's temple, where he marked her grave.
He ſteeled the blunt Batavian's arms
To burſt the Iberian's double chain; †
And cities reared, and planted farms,

* *On deſart iſles*——] Although Venice was built a conſiderable time before the æra here aſſigned for the birth of Independence, the republic had not yet attained to any great degree of power and ſplendour.

† *To burſt the Iberian's double chain.*] The Low Countries were not only oppreſſed by grievous taxations; but likewiſe threatened with the eſtabliſhment of the inquiſition, when the ſeven provinces revolted, and ſhook off the yoke of Spain.

Won from the ſkirts of Neptune's wide domain
He, with the generous ruſtics, ſate
On Uri's rocks in cloſe divan; *
And winged that arrow ſure as fate,
Which aſcertained the ſacred rights of man.

STROPHE.

Arabia's ſcorching ſands he croſt, †
Where blaſted Nature pants ſupine,
Conductor of her tribes aduſt,
To Freedom's adamantine ſhrine;
And many a Tartar hord forlorn, aghaſt, ‡
He ſnatched from under fell Oppreſſion's wing;
And taught amidſt the dreary waſte
The all-chearing hymns of Liberty to ſing.

* *On Uri's rocks*——] Alluding to the known ſtory of William Tell and his aſſociates, the fathers and founders of the confederacy of the Swiſs Cantons.

† *Arabia's ſcorching ſands*—] The Arabs rather than reſign their independency, have often abandoned their habitations, and encountered all the horrors of the deſart.

‡ *And many a Tartar hord*—] From the tyranny of Jenghis-Khan, Timur-Bec, and other eaſtern conquerors, whole tribes of Tartars were uſed to fly into the remoter waſtes of Cathay, where no army could follow them.

He Virtue finds, like precious ore,
Diffus'd through every baſer mould,
Even now he ſtands on Calvi's rocky ſhore,
And turns the droſs of Corſica to gold.*
He, guardian genius, taught my youth
Pomp's tinſel livery to deſpiſe:
My lips by him chaſtiſed to truth,
Ne'er payed that homage which the heart denies.

ANTISTROPHE.

Thoſe ſculptured halls my feet ſhall never tread,
Where varniſhed Vice and Vanity combin'd,
To dazzle and ſeduce, their banners ſpread;
And forge vile ſhackles for the free-born mind.
Where Inſolence his wrinkled front uprears;
And all the flowers of ſpurious Fancy blow;
And Title his ill-woven chaplet wears,

* *And turns the droſs of Corſica*—] The noble ſtand made by Paſchal Paoli and his aſſociates againſt the uſurpation of the French King, muſt endear them to all the ſons of liberty and independence.

Full often wreathed around the miſcreant's brow:
Where ever-dimpling Falſhood pert and vain,
Preſents her cup of ſtale Profeſſion's froth;
And pale Diſeaſe, with all his bloated train,
Torments the ſons of Gluttony and Sloth.

STROPHE.

In Fortune's car behold that minion ride,
With either India's glittering ſpoils oppreſt:
So moves the ſumpter-mule, in harneſſed pride,
That bears the treaſure which he cannot taſte.
For him let venal bards diſgrace the bay;
And hireling minſtrels wake the tinkling ſtring;
Her ſenſual ſnares let faithleſs Pleaſure lay;
And all her gingling bells fantaſtic Folly ring;
Diſquiet, Doubt, and Dread ſhall intervene;
And Nature, ſtill to all her feelings juſt,
In vengeance hang a damp on every ſcene,
Shook from the baleful pinions of Diſguſt.

ANTISTROPHE.

Nature I'll court in her ſequeſtered haunts,
By mountain, meadow, ſtreamlet, grove, or cell,
Where the poiſed lark his evening ditty chaunts,
And Health, and Peace, and Contemplation dwell.
There, Study ſhall with Solitude recline;
And Friendſhip pledge me to his fellow-ſwains;
And Toil and Temperance ſedately twine
The ſlender chord that fluttering Life ſuſtains:
And fearleſs Poverty ſhall guard the door;
And Taſte unſpoiled the frugal table ſpread;
And Induſtry ſupply the humble ſtore;
And Sleep unbribed his dews refreſhing ſhed:
White-mantled Innocence, etherial ſpright,
Shall chace far off the goblins of the night;
And Independence o'er the day preſide,
Propitious power! my patron and my pride.

OBSERVATIONS.

LYRIC POETRY imitates violent and ardent paſſions. It is therefore bold, various, and impetuous. It abounds with animated ſentiments, glowing images, and forms of ſpeech often unuſual, but commonly nervous and expreſſive. The compoſition and arrangement of parts may often appear diſordered, and the tranſitions ſudden and obſcure; but they are always natural, and are governed by the movements and variations of the imitated paſſion. The foregoing ode will illuſtrate theſe obſervations.

The introduction is poetical and abrupt.

'Thy ſpirit, Independence, let me ſhare!
'Lord of the lion-heart and eagle-eye,
'Thy ſteps I follow with my boſom bare,
'Nor heed the ſtorm that howls along the ſky.'

The picture exhibited in theſe lines is ſtriking, becauſe the circumſtances are happily choſen, briefly, and diſtinctly delineated. It is ſublime, becauſe the images are few, and in themſelves great and magnificent. The 'lion-heart and eagle-eye' ſuggeſt an idea of the high ſpirit and commanding aſpect of Independence: and the poet following with 'boſom bare' denotes, in a pictureſque manner, the eagerneſs and enthuſiaſm of the votary. The laſt circumſtance is peculiarly happy.

'Nor heeds the ſtorm that howls along the the ſky.'

It marks the ſcene: it is unexpected, and excites ſurprize: it is great and awful, and excites aſtoniſhment. Combined with the preceeding circumſtance, it conveys a beautiful allegorical meaning; and ſignifies, that a mind truly independent is ſuperior to adverſity, and unmoved by external accidents. We may obſerve too, in regard to the diction, that the notions of ſound and motion communicated by the words 'howl' and 'along,' contribute, in a peculiar manner, to the ſublimity of the deſcription.

'Lord of the lion-heart and eagle-eye,
'Thy ſteps I follow with my boſom bare,
'Nor heed the ſtorm that howls along the ſky.'

Theſe lines are written in the true ſpirit of lyric poetry. Without preparing the mind by a cool artificial introduction, riſing gradually to the impetuoſity of paſſion, they aſſail the imagination by an abrupt and ſudden impulſe; they vibrate through the ſoul, and fire us inſtantaneouſly with all the ardour and enthuſiaſm of the poet. Many of the odes of Horace are compoſed in the ſame ſpirit, and produce ſimilar effects. Without any previous argument or introduction, in the fulneſs of paſſion and imagination, he breaks out in bold, powerful, and impetuous figures.

'Quo me, Bacche, rapis, tui
'Plenum? Quae nemora aut quos agor in ſpecus
'Velox mente nova?——
'Qualem miniſtrum fulminis alitem'——

The poet, full of enthuſiaſm and admiration, continues his proſopopeia; and, in a ſtrain of poetry exceedingly wild and romantic, gives us the genealogy of Independence.

'A goddeſs violated brought thee forth,
'Immortal Liberty, whoſe look ſublime
'Hath bleached the tyrant's cheek in every varying clime.'

According to the acceptation of our author, Liberty means the ſecurity of our lives and poſſeſſions, and freedom from external force: Independence is of higher import, and denotes that internal ſenſe and conſciouſneſs of freedom which beget magnanimity, fortitude, and that becoming pride which leads us to reſpect ourſelves, and do nothing unworthy of our condition. Liberty therefore is, with perfect propriety, ſaid to be the mother of Independence, and Diſdain his father—Diſdain ariſing from indignation againſt an oppreſſor, and triumph on having fruſtrated or eſcaped his malice. This ſtern perſonage is ſtrongly characterized in the following direct deſcription.

'Of ample front the portly chief appear'd:
'The hunted bear ſupplyed a ſhaggy veſt;
'The drifted ſnow hung on his yellow beard;
'And his broad ſhoulders braved the furious blaſt.'

Men may enjoy liberty without independence: they may be ſecure in their perſons and poſſeſſions, without feeling any uncommon elevation of mind, or any ſenſe of their freedom. But if their liberty is attacked, they are alarmed, they feel the value of their condition, they are moved with indignation againſt their oppreſſors, they exert themſelves, and if they are ſucceſsful, or eſcape the danger that threatened them, they triumph, they reflect on the happineſs and dignity conferred by freedom, they applaud themſelves for their exertions, become magnanimous and independent. There is therefore no leſs propriety in deducing the origin of Independence from Diſdain and Liberty, than in fixing the aera of his birth. The Saxons, according to our author, free, ſimple, and inoffenſive, were attacked, eſcaped the violence of their adverſary, reflected on the felicity of their condition, and learned independence.

The education of Independence, and the ſcene of his nativity are ſuited to his illuſtrious lineage, and to the high atchievements for which he was deſtined.

'The light he ſaw in Albion's happy plains,
'Where under cover of a flowering thorn,
'While Philomel renewed her warbled ſtrains,
'The auſpicious fruit of ſtoln embrace was born—
'The mountain Dryads ſeized with joy,
'The ſmiling infant to their charge conſign'd;
'The Doric muſe careſſed the favourite boy;
'The hermit Wiſdom ſtored his opening mind.'—

The imagery in theſe lines is ſoft and agreeable, the language ſmooth, and the verſification numerous.

Independence thus deſcended, and thus divinely inſtructed and endowed, diſtinguiſhes himſelf accordingly by heroic and beneficent actions.

'Accompliſhed thus, he winged his way,
'And zealous roved from pole to pole,
'The rolls of right eternal to diſplay,
'And warm with patriot thoughts the aſpiring ſoul.'

The ode may be divided into three parts. The poet ſets out with a brief addreſs to Independence, imploring his protection. He ſees, in idea, the high object of his adoration, and tranſported by an ardent and irreſiſtible impulſe, he rehearſes his birth, education, and qualities. He proceeds, in the ſecond place, to celebrate his office and moſt renowned atchievements; and returns, at the end of the third ſtrophe, to acknowledge with gratitude the protection he had requeſted, and the power of Independence in preſerving him untainted by the debaſing influences of Grandeur, and the admiration of vain magnificence. Animated with this reflection, and conſcious of the dignity annexed to an independent ſtate of mind, he inveighs againſt thoſe 'minions of fortune' who would impoſe upon mankind by the oſtentation of wealth, and the parade of pageantry.

'In Fortune's car behold that minion ride,
'With either India's glittering ſpoils oppreſt:
'So moves the ſumpter-mule, in harneſſed pride,
'That bears the treaſure which he cannot taſte.
'For him let venal bards diſgrace the bay;
'And hireling minſtrels wake the tinkling ſtring;
'Her ſenſual ſnares let faithleſs Pleaſure lay;
'And all her gingling bells fantaſtic Folly ring;
'Diſquiet, Doubt, and Dread ſhall intervene;
'And Nature, ſtill to all her feelings juſt,
'In vengeance hang a damp on every ſcene,
'Shook from the baleful pinions of Diſguſt.'

Theſe lines embelliſhed by fancy, and recommended to the heart by harmony, are the invective of truth and honeſt indignation.

In the laſt antiſtrophe the poet deſcends from his enthuſiaſm; he is leſs impetuous; the illuſtrious paſſions that animated and impelled him are exhauſted; but they leave his mind full of their genuine and benign influences, not agitated and diſordered, as if their tendency had been vicious, but glowing with ſelf-approbation, ſoft, gentle, and compoſed.

GLASGOW, February 23d, 1773.

FINIS.